

Ministry Formation Workgroup

A Standing Committee Report to CRCA Synod 2009
(Condensed Version)

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The CRCA Synod will be meeting 10 - 16 May in Wonga Park, Victoria. Under God's grace as a denomination we now have a new rallying point for the next chapter in our common life. Does it mean that all churches, pastors, church councils, Classes are all at the same stage, bearing the same growth, growing the same harvest? No. But we are united around the common vision: to be a church reforming to reach the lost for Christ. What does the next step of the journey look like for the CRCA? In this abbreviated version of the full report going to Synod you will read what this journey will look like.

Contents

| | | |
|----|--|----------|
| 1. | Introduction | III – 1 |
| 2. | The Fourfold Task | III – 2 |
| 3. | What and How from here? | III – 4 |
| 4. | The Work of Classis | III – 7 |
| 5. | The Work of the Denomination | III – 7 |
| 6. | Ministry Formation: Denominational Committee Restructure | III – 9 |
| 7. | Ministry Formation: Purposeful Alignment | III – 10 |
| 8. | Recommendations | III – 11 |
| | Appendix 1 – CRCA Restructure – Workgroup Mandate Parameters | III – 12 |
| | Appendix 4 – Ministry Coordinator Blog | III – 15 |
| | Appendix 5 – Proposed Church Visitation Questions | III – 20 |

1. INTRODUCTION

Synod 2006 agreed to endorse and implement the recommendations that became the mandate not just for the Ministry Formation Workgroup, but the activity of each local church, Classis and the Synod. In doing this, the CRCA embarked on a grand and ambitious journey. We are now three years in, and much has taken place. Mainly this has involved getting the word out with the fourfold task, refocusing the current synodical committees and structures with recommendations for action at the levels of local church, Classis and the Synod.

As a workgroup, we have a deep sense of thanksgiving and we are very humbled at what the Lord has done. We have covered a lot of ground and made some significant progress. God has been good, and there is an air of expectation of what might still be done in the churches. Attached to this report you will find some descriptions of the steps taken and implementation of the decisions of 2006. In the main body of the report we will address the tasks and challenges that lie ahead of us. It is the view of the MFW that what we need at this point is to discern how best we may continue to build "a church reforming to reach the lost for Christ".

2. THE FOURFOLD TASK – CULTIVATING A NEW RALLYING POINT

It may be helpful to introduce the metaphor of cultivation as a way of describing the progress of the work towards living the fourfold task. Cultivation is the process of preparing the ground for planting and growing a crop that in time will produce the harvest. The work of cultivation will vary from garden to garden, depending on the hardness of the soil, moisture content, health of the soil and the various mixtures of fertilizer required for cropping.

The metaphor of cultivation is helpful for the story of the CRCA. Each of our congregations represents the soil out of which the Lord of the harvest is working. We are unique and particular, and the work of 'cultivation' may vary significantly from local church to local church.

Over the last three years our denomination has been undergoing this process of cultivation. This has been occurring through the decisions of Synod, the input and teaching at the Ministers' and Wives' Conferences, and the work of Jack De Vries in his contact with all pastors and/or churches of the CRCA. Under God's grace we now have a new rallying point for the next chapter in our common life. Does it mean that all churches, pastors, church councils, Classes are all at the same stage, bearing the same growth, growing the same harvest? No. But we are united around the common vision: to be a church reforming to reach the lost for Christ. To continue the metaphor: we all seek the harvest, but each local church may need to do different things to get to that point.

2.1. Stories of Engagement

As you read, our prayer will be that you will share our deep gratitude for how our churches work to pray, multiply, train and align. Jack De Vries, our Ministry Training Coordinator (MTC), has in the past year travelled across Australia, and listened to your stories of cultivating the fourfold task. Here are a few of them:

Pray...

Imagine a small cluster of believers who are banded together to pray for their neighbourhood or workplace. They are a spiritual power-house. They are praying for the release of God's power and grace into the lives of those around them. The Bible urges us: "First of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone. This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:1-3). It pleases our heavenly Father when we are about the fourfold task: "To pray for such an outpouring of his Spirit that his people will be assured of his love through his Word, seek to please the Saviour in all things, manifest the godly life and be filled with prayerful and sacrificial compassion for the lost in all the world."

A small group of believers in Gosnells, WA, have committed themselves to pray for, care for, and share Christ with their community. Encouraged by their two pastors, John De Jongh and Hans Vaatstra, and supported by their session, these church members are intentionally allowing their light to shine. The goal is to begin by praying for the community, and door knock a designated area surveying people in regard to the needs in the community. As individual/community needs come to light that they are able to help meet as a church, they begin to involve others who can help care for those in need. As they build relationships with the people in the community, this will become an opportunity to begin to share the gospel with them.

Prayer, care, and share! It sounds simple, but being filled with prayerful and sacrificial compassion for the lost does not have to be complex. On the ministry formation website, churches are able to access resources which will enable them to encourage a harvest prayer focus among their members. One resource is "All About Lighthouses." Churches can discover what it means, like Gosnells CRC, to be committed to pray for, care for and share Christ with family members, friends, classmates, coworkers and neighbours, especially those who do not know him.

Multiply...

With the Australian population growing by 1 million every three years, there is a need for 1000 new churches every three years just to keep up with population growth. Travel across Australia, what do you discover within the CRCA? You find a church in Queensland, Mansfield, which is committed to reach out to the 1000 new people who move weekly into the sunshine state. With some funding assistance from the CRCA, they have hired two home missionaries to stimulate outreach through a small group ministry with a missional focus.

Move south to the Hunter Valley and you find a small group of believers committed to establish an outpost for the gospel on the shores of Tanilba Bay. A new gospel worker, David Trounce, has been hired, partially funded by the sale of the Glendale church facility. This will enable both Newcastle congregations to intentionally and separately reach the lost for Christ in their respective neighbourhoods.

Go all the way to the west, and you will meet Ross Patterson, a retired teacher, who is pastoring a new church plant in Kalgoorlie. You will also come across Geoff Van Schie reaching out in the wheat belt area, establishing gatherings of believers committed to make a gospel impact. And the momentum is growing. In every state churches are exploring the possibility of reproducing themselves by planting new churches. Only the next three years will reveal what part the CRCA will play in contributing to the need for the next 1000 churches.

Train...

The apostle Paul reminds Timothy: “You have often heard me teach. Now I want you to tell these same things to followers who can be trusted to tell others” (2 Timothy 2:2 CEV). Pop over to Willetton CRC and peek into their hub of offices. You will meet two brothers, Craig and Matt Verdouw, who are being discipled as ministry interns. Not only are they engaged in ministry, but pastors Tony Van Drimmelen and Ollie Hegggers are mentoring Craig and Matt in areas of character, competence, and conviction. These two brothers are making a gospel impact not only in the Willetton congregation, but beyond among the youth and young adults in Western Australia. Who knows what God has planned for these young men?

This commitment to train the next generation of leaders is not limited to pastors working with interns. In WA Target 21 has adopted as their mission: “To train young people to be leaders in their God-given calling so that they may serve God by making disciples and bringing them to maturity.”

You find the same commitment among the leaders of the THING in NSW. The Trowel & Sword ‘youth mag’ has highlighted the impact Target 21 and THING are making in discipling future leaders. It might be at Westside CRC in Goodna, QLD, Kingston CRC, in Kingston, TAS, or Dandenong CRC in Dandenong, VIC, but go there and you will find church leaders entrusting things to reliable people who in turn will teach others. Some of these people will become our future ministers. Others will head overseas into missions. Some will become effective in local church ministry. They might be paid or volunteer, ordained or unordained, young or older, male or female – but people are being equipped for the work of ministry so that the church will be built up.

Align...

Down the road from Dandenong CRC, just around the bay, the session of Langwarrin CRC is wrestling with future directions. Nestled in a growing community and lots of opportunity for outreach, these church leaders desire to impact their community with the gospel. But they want to make sure they are doing the right thing in the right way. So they enquired about Natural Church Development (NCD). After learning how a NCD survey will assist them with future directions, they committed themselves to do the survey within their congregation. They desire to be a healthy congregation effective in outreach and growing in number. Once the survey is completed and the results are

tabulated, Ministry Formation will partner with them in mapping out a desired future. This might mean initiating some new directions – but this is what alignment is all about: ensuring that the ministry of the church is focussed on the fundamental aim of reaching the lost for Christ. The NCD process will assist the Langwarrin session in securing a healthy congregation. And healthy congregations will grow.

Langwarrin CRC is not alone. Some churches like Wantirna CRC, VIC, or Gateway Community Church, WA, do annual NCD surveys. Other churches like Bray Park Community Church, QLD, and Geelong CRC, VIC, are planning for their initial surveys. But the aspirations are the same: what will it take for the church to become healthier, more effective in ministry, more faithful in witness, more focussed on glorifying God in every aspect of church life. As discoveries are made, then the work of alignment begins. But the goal is worth it: reaching the lost for Christ!

3. WHAT AND HOW FROM HERE?

What does the next step of the journey look like for the CRCA? Using the fourfold task as our guide, the MFW proposes the following.

3.1. The Work of the Ministry Training Coordinator

3.1.1. Encouraging harvest prayer

Having completed initial visits with all the churches in our denomination, Jack De Vries will now concentrate on the next phase of his work: assisting local churches and their leaders to implement the goals of the f-fold task. He will continue to prayerfully encourage harvest prayer throughout our denomination. Jesus reminds us: “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Matthew 9:37). Not only is Jack committed to pray for each church and every pastor and his family, but he will encourage at all levels (church, classis, and denomination) that we as the CRCA be steadfast in praying for a Spirit-led revival in our churches and country.

3.1.2. Coaching and support of local churches and ministries

Partnership with a growing number of churches will continue in this next phase of his work. Jack will provide coaching to those engaged on the frontline of church planting: Kalgoorlie, Wongan Hills, Mansfield, Tanilba Bay, and other future plants. He sits on the Church Planting Taskforce, and with this team he will continue to encourage church planting among the churches. A denominational church planting conference is scheduled in February 2009 in the Kingston, TAS, area.

Healthy churches are multiplying churches. To maximise healthy churches Jack will engage churches in doing a NCD (Natural Church Development) analysis. Currently he is working with Geelong, Langwarrin, Wantirna, and Bray Park in doing the NCD survey and applying the outcomes. The NCD process is only as good as any response and action plan developed by the respective church. Those local churches who have not done an NCD survey will be encouraged to do so.

A common result from an NCD survey is the realisation that the local church scores low in needs orientated evangelism. Community outreach is more than simply buying a program and doing it. It involves discovering what God is doing in a church and community and what God is calling the church to do. Some churches, like Westside Community Church in Goodna, QLD, have engaged in a Community Opportunities Scan. This resource is available on the Ministry Formation website, and will assist churches in discovering what unique shape community outreach might look like for the local church. Devonport CRC, TAS, has gone through a similar process in 2008 assisted by outside resourcing.

Jack will continue to avail himself to churches to assist them in discovering ways each church

can uniquely impact their communities with the gospel.

3.1.3. Encouraging leadership development

Leadership development will be crucial if the CRCA seeks to realise some of its fourfold goals. For this reason Jack will partner with the Reformed Theological College as they seek to explore their preferred future. What will maximize the number of people trained for gospel work in Australia and beyond? Jack will also continue to work with Target 21/THING leaders in spurring on the next generation of leaders. Currently Jack is coaching a couple of CRCA pastors as they themselves mentor others in ministry skills. He will continue to avail himself as a coach to churches, sessions, and pastors as we together seek to intentionally raise leaders and maximize the impact of the gospel.

While Jack will specifically partner with 6-8 churches/ministries at any given time, he will continue to keep contact with all the churches and pastors. This will be maintained through visits, phone calls, and emails. By keeping in touch, Jack will keep the missional vision on the front page of all our agendas so that as a denomination we will keep the main thing the main thing: reaching the lost for Christ.

A key component of leadership development is resourcing. Jack will continue the ongoing development of the Ministry Formation website (www.ministryformation.com.au). Through the website, the MFW will continue to implement the goals set at Synod 2006. This site will be the premier place for churches to access good resources, hear about upcoming events, learn of what is happening throughout the CRCA, and engage in a helpful discussion of matters related to the implementation of the fourfold task. Jack will be soliciting contact information from each church so that the monthly newsletter will be sent to all those in ministry within the local church. Our goal through the website is to engage not solely ministers but all those in other ministries in our churches: elders, deacons, committee members, youth workers, small group leaders, and other leaders. Jack will ensure that the website is reaching the next generation of leaders. We intend that the website becomes a vehicle for a missional conversation throughout our denomination and beyond. So we encourage you to enter the web address into your favourites, and to visit the site weekly. Please also encourage key people within your congregation to do the same.

3.2. The Work of Each Local Church: Empower and Train

3.2.1. Local churches assess their discipleship and leadership development effort

Every local congregation and Classis is to be engaged in the question: how are existing leaders developed and grown, and how are potential leaders identified and empowered into ministry and leadership within our churches? The need for the local church involves – but is not limited to – those who are called to serve in pastoral ministry, or “Big M” ministry as it has been referred to lately. Ministry is service, and to that end each congregation, regardless of size, is to be a healthy reproducing community of empowerment and training.

It means asking the following questions of ourselves:

- Is the local congregation to which I belong engaged in grass roots discipleship and training? Are the processes and tracks easily identified as to how new leaders are identified and existing leaders are trained; how new leaders are nurtured and apprenticed and existing leaders are developed and released? If you cannot see the process or tracks clearly, then it probably means they are ineffective.
- Because we are a diversity of churches, we need to acknowledge that we are at different stages on a continuum. This call to self assessment is critical; it is only when we are honest about where we are that we will have the ability to move forward. Self assessment is by means of the following continuum:

- We have no established discipleship and training process;
- We have some success in developing existing leaders, but limited effectiveness in identifying new leaders;
- We have some success in identifying new leaders, but limited effectiveness in training existing leaders;
- We have some success in identifying new leaders, and have implemented some processes for training leaders, but this still needs more work for maximum effectiveness;
- We have a strong track record of identifying, training and releasing people into effective ministry.

Regardless of where we place ourselves on the continuum, there are resources and methods that will enable us to move forward. The key is that we are challenged to move forward, and to know what that will look like in our context.

There is a trend among our churches to consider that larger churches are more resource rich and therefore it is easier to train and develop than in smaller churches. Smaller churches at times will say, “we can’t do that because we don’t have the resources”. While it may be true that larger congregations generally have a larger variety of resources at their disposal, it is also true that smaller churches have some efficiencies and advantages that larger churches do not enjoy. Regardless of our size the challenge remains, and if our doctrine of the church has any validity – the belief that God has placed within the church the gifts necessary for its ministry – then we are to move forward from that conviction.

3.3. The Work of the MFW: to develop an integrated approach to discipleship and leadership development

There are various training programs available within our churches for ministry workers.

- **Internships** are available and supported through the CRCA Resource Centre. They are designed to equip our people for a wide range of ministry activities and are based on a mix of practical training and course material. They are accredited through ACOM and attract Austudy.
- The **MTS apprenticeship** is run by the local church and is primarily used to give men and women a taste of full time ministry. The program is specifically intended to raise up a new generation of ministry workers for our churches. It is supported by MTS Limited and was started by the Sydney Anglicans. There are MTS network coordinators in every state who run MTS Challenge conferences and assist in supporting MTS apprentices.
- The **RTC** also runs a great range of in-house courses at various levels (one year, diploma, degree, masters).
- The Kingston CRC in Tasmania is currently trialing BILD International’s Church Based Theological Education (CBTE) program which provides a full theological education course that is delivered in and by the church. It is focussed very closely on the two key tasks of the fourfold task (multiplying ministries and raising up leaders).

In addition to the above there are around 15-20 young people around the denomination who are studying at various local theological colleges. Most of them do this so they don’t have to uproot their families, and so that they can continue serving in their local churches where they feel they have been called. What is therefore needed is for the Ministry Formation Committee, in conjunction with the RTC, to develop a consistent and integrated approach to raising and developing leaders.

Further, as we continue to seek effective ways of training and discipleship, we need to be

aware of the possibilities that exist within today’s rapidly developing digital culture (i.e., podcasts, video links, internet, etc, etc.)

4. THE WORK OF CLASSIS: TO ASSIST CHURCHES IN THEIR TASK

On the last day of Synod 2006, the question of reviewing the Church Visitation Questions was raised, given the denomination’s commitment to implementing the fourfold task. This was noted, and the SIC decided that the MFW would review the Church Visitation Questions for the purpose of helping congregations sharpen their focus on the fourfold task.

The purpose of what is proposed is as follows: The areas of discussion and interaction identified in the CV Questions are shaped around the CRCA fourfold mission task. The intention is not that Sessions try to give “right” answers, but that they think carefully and interact honestly on how the church is doing in its gospel calling.

Attached as [Appendix 5](#) you will find the proposed Church Visitation Questions for the CRCA.

5. THE WORK OF THE DENOMINATION: TO REFORM OUR STRUCTURES AND ALIGN THEM TO THE FOURFOLD TASK

It has been identified that in order to continue to move towards fulfilling the fourfold task, structural realignment of our denomination is required. We have a structure that has developed over time, and the critical question is whether it will, in its current form, continue to serve us as effectively as it could. The movement towards structural alignment is one that will call from us a commitment to grace and peace as we seek to keep the fourfold task foremost. Remember we are a church reforming to reach the lost for Christ.

Change and restructure are never easy things to work through. Some may remember that when ROAD (Resources for Outreach, Aid & Development) was first established (in 1985), there was a concern that this may become a ‘super committee’ with too much power. Now, 24 years down the track, we can see that this has not happened, and that ROAD is functioning well as a coordinating body between the different mission arms of the CRCA. ROAD has provided a workable context for these different arms to collaborate and work more effectively together.

The ROAD model is similar to what we envisage for the two main arms of our future structure, arranged around the tasks of **multiplication** and **training**. We believe two coordinating workgroups will provide the best context for collaboration between related arms of ministry in the CRCA. The overall purpose of this restructure will be to provide ongoing focus toward the fourfold task we have embraced together.

The MFW did not want to presume to write detailed mandates for every workgroup – some current workgroups have very large mandates indeed. What we have done is to provide what we hope to be clear mandate parameters for each workgroup (see [Appendix 1](#)). Our recommendation is that in the inter-synodical period all CRCA workgroups reshape their current mandate to fit the parameters adopted at this Synod.

In summary, the plan is to start the work of aligning committees to the fourfold task at this Synod, agree on the basic parameters together, and then have that work completed in its detail by next Synod. We believe this process will provide maximum consultation and input along with the necessary focus required for the work.

What are some of the values and questions that we must consider in order to realign structurally, so that our common life organisationally will help move us towards increased Gospel

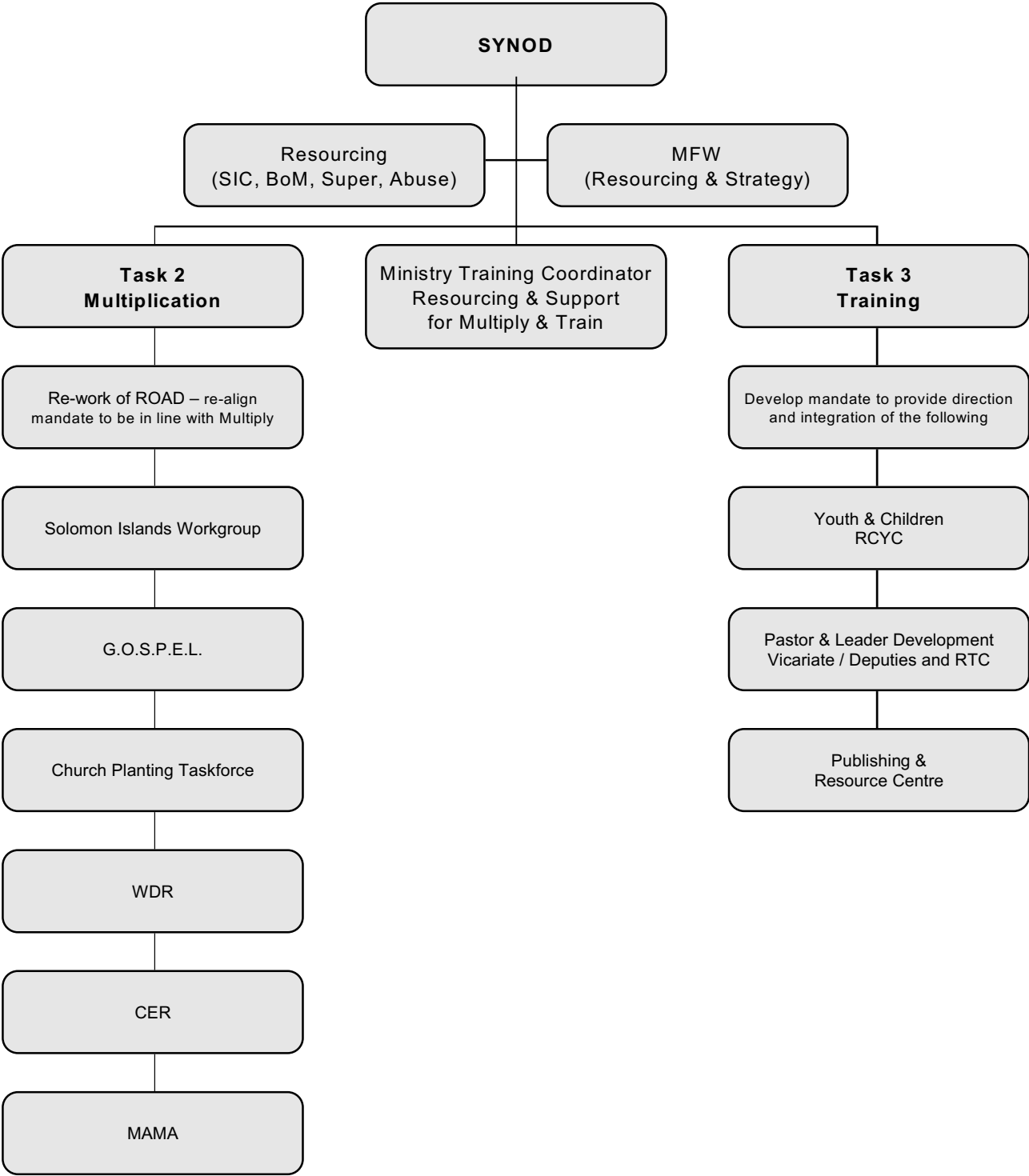
effectiveness and focus?

- We are to keep in mind that structure must always be the servant not the master. It seems obvious, and something to which we would readily assent. But when it comes to changing our practice based on years of commitment to a particular mandate, agenda and conversation, sometimes this can be forgotten.
- We are to keep in mind that while we have a deep aversion to hierarchy and power, good alignment with the fourfold task may mean some of our committee tasks which have been separate and distinct will need to be brought together for the sake of Gospel effectiveness.
- We are to keep in mind that our response to change will be as varied as we are individual. For some there will be an enthusiastic embrace of the change, for others a cautious evaluation and for others yet perhaps a rejection before even considering what the future might look like.

Below you will find a flow chart outlining what a possible structural realignment would look like. As you read and examine the diagrams that follow, please consider some of the rationale and thinking behind this proposal:

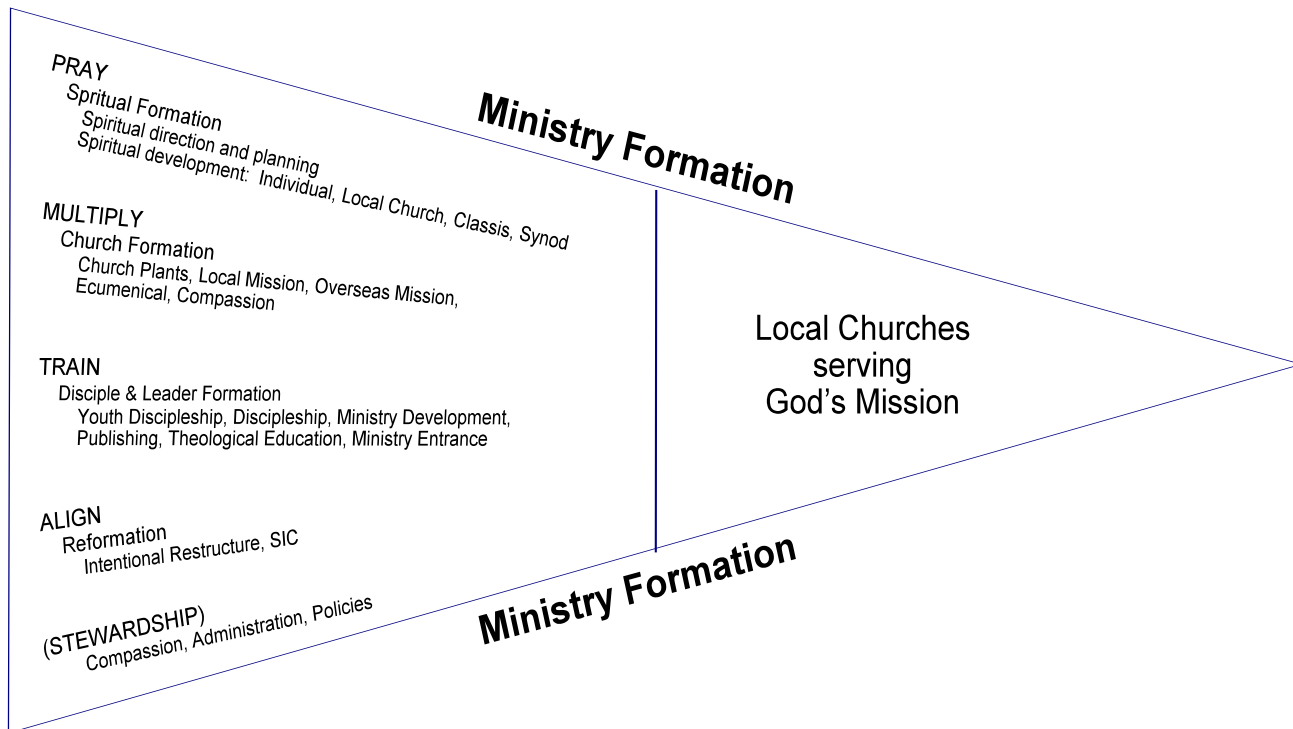
- The role of resourcing will be taken in under the work of the SIC and the BOM. These are the contexts where inter-synodical issues of business, financial management of our resources, and appropriate policies are managed.
- The role of the MFW is seen as a critical role over the next number of years as we make the necessary structural transitions. The function of the MFW is to guide and advise on the implementation of our re-alignment, to help discern the strategic next steps, and keep promoting the vision of the fourfold task.
- The role of the Ministry Training Coordinator is critical as an anchor between the alignment of our denomination around the tasks of ‘multiplication’ and ‘training’.
- In terms of Synodical workgroups:
 - Some workgroups will remain;
 - Some workgroups will realign and be brought together where there are common tasks;
 - Each workgroup will have a leader who will represent a work team in either of the major task groups.

6. MINISTRY FORMATION: DENOMINATIONAL COMMITTEE RESTRUCTURE



7. MINISTRY FORMATION: PURPOSEFUL ALIGNMENT

The following diagram gives the best overall perspective of the work of ministry formation, the fourfold task, and the restructure it requires.



Please note the following:

- The ongoing work of ministry formation is a channelling and focussing process;
- Its single purpose is to serve local churches in their embrace of God's mission;
- The basic tasks we have identified (i.e., the fourfold task) give expression to the large part of the work we seek to do as churches;
- The dynamic is directional and purposeful: our aim is greater effectiveness for local churches in God's mission;
- All denominational effort finds its rallying point in moving local churches deeper into God's mission.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To receive this Report and its Appendices.
2. To approve the work of the Ministry Formation Workgroup with regard to the following:
 1. The appointment of Br Jack De Vries as the Ministry Training Coordinator;
 2. The development of the Ministry Formation website;
 3. The publication of the monthly e-News.
3. To adopt in principle the restructure of CRCA Committees:
 1. To adopt the Mandate Parameters as the guiding mandates for CRCA committees and workgroups;
 2. To instruct the Moderamen of Synod 2009 and the current Ministry Formation Workgroup to finalise the restructure of CRCA committees as much as possible during Synod, taking into account discussions on the floor of Synod;
 3. To instruct all committees and workgroups to align the detail of their mandates with the mandate parameters in the next inter-synodical period.
4. To adopt and implement the revised Church Visitation Questions.
5. To encourage all churches to evaluate their particular leadership development needs by:
 1. Assessing where they would place themselves on the leadership development continuum;
 2. Implementing an appropriate response using available resources in leadership development.
 3. Undergo a yearly evaluation as to the progress of leadership development around the fourfold task.
6. To mandate the Ministry Formation Workgroup to assess and advise on the various training programs available and present an integrated and consistent approach to the churches and the Synod.
7. To mandate the Ministry Formation Workgroup to organise the program for the next Ministers' and Wives' Conference, as a way of remaining focussed and deliberate in our pursuit of the fourfold task.

Respectfully submitted,

The Ministry Formation Workgroup.

Appendix 1

CRCA Restructure – Workgroup Mandate Parameters

(see the diagram in section 6 of this Report)

TASK 2 – MULTIPLICATION

The workgroup for Task 2 will comprise the basic work areas of the current ROAD workgroup.

Task 2 Mandate Parameters

To stimulate the planting and multiplication of healthy churches and the penetration of all levels of society with the Gospel.

‘Multiply’ Subgroups

Church Plants

- Stimulate and resource a movement of churches that plant churches.
 - Comprises: current Church Planting Taskforce.

Local Mission

- Stimulate and resource local churches to innovative, outward focussed mission projects aligned to fourfold task.
 - Comprises: Home mission aspects of ROAD.

Overseas Mission

- Mission in word and/or deed which both respects and raises up indigenous Gospel culture.
 - Comprises: Overseas mission aspects of ROAD, SIW, GOSPEL.

Ecumenical

- All CER relationships directed toward missional outcomes.
 - Comprises: current Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER).

Compassion

- Stimulate compassionate response to local and international needs.
 - Comprises: current World Diaconate Relief.

Resource Stewardship

- Stewardship of financial resources for local churches toward goals and projects central to the fourfold task.
 - Comprises: current MAMA.

TASK 3 – TRAINING

Task 3 Mandate Parameters

To assist the churches to multiply well trained people dedicated to creating and developing healthy churches and Kingdom witness.

‘Train’ Subgroups

Youth Discipleship

- Develop effective processes and encourage local church ethos which leads young people and children to faith and into discipleship.
 - Comprises: RCYC.

Discipleship

- Grow disciples that make and grow disciples.
- Propagation of resources which will lead local churches to health.
 - Comprises: aspects of MFW, CRCA Resources.

Leader Development

- Encourage local church cultures which identify upcoming leaders at the earliest opportunity.
- Encourage local church cultures of faithful, skilled and intelligent leaders which develop leaders who mentor others.
- Encourage the formation of leaders characterised by mature spirituality, flexibility, creativity and passionate for a healthy church and a restored community.
- Stimulate all local church ministries to pursue and affirm the fourfold task.
 - Comprises: aspects of MFW.

Publishing & Information

- Resourcing churches toward health and mission.
- Resourcing people toward discipleship.
- Propagation of Gospel through various media.
 - Comprises: Publications.

Pastor Development

- Stimulate all local church pastors to pursue and affirm fourfold task.
- Facilitate calling process to maximise good fit and effective ministry.
 - Comprises: PCRC.

Theological Education

- Train ministry workers for healthy churches and passionate embrace of fourfold task.
 - Comprises: current RTC deputies.

Pastor Entrance

- Warm support and encouragement of all pastoral ministry trainees in varied training contexts.
- Maintain appropriate pastoral ministry entrance standards to support fourfold task.
 - Comprises: current Vicariate Committee.

TASK 4 – ‘ALIGN’

Task 4 Mandate Parameters

To ensure continuously that all structures, processes, policies and church ethos are effectively directed toward the mission.

‘Align’ Subgroups

Intentional Restructure

- Ongoing review of CRCA structures and processes to ensure effective pursuit of fourfold task.
 - Comprises: aspects of current MFW.

Synodical Interim Committee (SIC)

- Oversees implementation of Synod decisions.
- Keep fourfold task focus before churches.

STEWARDSHIP

While not strictly one of the fourfold task areas, there is an obvious need for the denomination to have transparent and accountable structures and policies. These areas are largely covered by the current synodical Board of Management (BoM).

Stewardship Mandate Parameters

To ensure denominational resources are justly and efficiently directed toward the mission.

Stewardship Subgroups

Resource Management

- Stewardship of CRCA resources to ensure effective pursuit of mission.
- Judicious investment to maximise resources for mission.
 - Comprises: current Board of Management, Synodical Administrator.

Superannuation

- Interaction with Superannuation providers approved by Synod.
- Communication of information to CRCA Superannuation members.
 - Comprises: current Superannuation Deputies.

Administrator

- Efficient implementation of denominational tasks for mission and management.
 - Comprises: current Synodical Administrator.

Policies

- Implementation of policies design to ensure safe places of ministry and service in all local churches.
 - Comprises: current Abuse Committee.

Appendix 4

Ministry Coordinator Blog

Arrival

The evening night sky was lit up upon our arrival to Australia. While it was a wonderful welcome to this vast land, we admittedly knew that our cities were welcoming not us, but the New Year! And with the onset of the new year began a new year of experiences for us.

Our first course of action was to settle into a home and community. We immediately set up bank accounts, arranged for drivers' licences, applied for permanent residency, and began looking for a home. In God's rich providence, within two weeks we had an accepted offer on the home we eventually moved into in Petrie, a northern suburb of Brisbane. By the end of February the container arrived from Canada and our household items were placed into our home. With that we could devote all our energy into the work for which we were called. The warm welcome by the Ministry Formation team and the people of Bray Park Community Church, our worshipping community, made the transition to a new community much easier.

Priorities

My initial priority was to meet all the pastors and/or churches as quickly as possible to get a lay of the land and CRCA congregations. All pastors serving congregations have been visited. Many presentations promoting the fourfold task have been made to churches, sessions/councils, and/or leadership teams. Since we live in Queensland, contacts with pastors, churches, and Classis Queensland have been made throughout the year.

In 2008 a total of 12 interstate trips were made, as follows:

- March: South Australia & Victoria;
- April: New South Wales, Tasmania;
- May: Western Australia;
- June: Victoria, Canberra (ACT);
- September: Tasmania & Victoria;
- October: Victoria, New South Wales;
- November: Victoria, New South Wales;
- December: New South Wales & Western Australia.

These trips took me to South Australia and Canberra 1X, Tasmania and Western Australia 2X, New South Wales 4X, and Victoria 5X. This corresponds to the ratio of churches in the respective states/territory.

This allowed me the opportunity to not only meet pastors, their wives, and many of their families, but also build relationships with congregations and their leaders. These relationships led to a number of follow up meetings and visits resulting in:

- Visits to pastors 82;
- Church presentations 38;
- Preaching in Churches 17;
- Classis presentations 4.

In keeping with the fourfold strategy of implementing a missional focus among the churches of the CRCA I have been encouraging pastors and churches to be difference makers in our world. It is critical as churches that we seriously examine whether or not our ministries are producing maturing disciples. Are the lost being found and the found being discipled? Are we as churches and as a denomination making an impact for the gospel? To this end, in my contact I have been encouraging:

- the practice of intentional prayer for the lost;
- the diagnosis of local church health by utilising the Natural Church Development survey (NCD);
- the implementation of needs-orientated evangelism by doing a “Community Opportunities Scan”; and,
- raising up the next generation of leaders through intentional discipleship and leadership development.

Leadership development is a key aspect of the fourfold task. The CRCA is committed to multiplying the number of well-trained persons (ordained, non-ordained, full time, part time, voluntary). This raising up of leaders is done through various means. I have been encouraging churches to take serious the task of raising up new leaders. This begins in families and the local church.

In my own local church I am engaged in mentoring leaders. Throughout the CRCA I have begun mentoring relationships with a number of pastors to assist them in leadership development. I have met with our denominational youth worker, Jonathan Vandenberg, and in partnership with the RTC, explored ways to enhance the apprenticeship program. I have collaborated with the RTC, our primary training institution for gospel workers, to examine ways we can advance the raising up of leaders in keeping with the fourfold task. The importance of leadership development was the reason for my involvement with the Fan the Flame Conference, Target 21, the Art of Ministry Training (MTS), attending the RTC Preaching Conference, and speaking at a young adult retreat in WA.

Leadership development happens in many ways and through a number of excellent conferences throughout Australia. A significant aspect of the first year in my role as Ministry Training Coordinator has been orientation and establishing leadership networks throughout the denomination and Australia. The key events in 2008 included:

- February:
 - attended Evangelising Australia conference in Sydney.
- March:
 - made presentations at the Fan the Flame conference at the Reformed Theological College (RTC).
- April:
 - met with the faculty of RTC in Geelong.
- May:
 - attended Crowded House seminar at Moore College, Sydney;
 - received Art of Ministry (MTS) training in Kingston;
 - met with representatives of Veritas College in Perth;
 - spoke at a retreat for youth/young adult leaders in Classis WA;
 - networked with Next 1000 leaders in Brisbane;
 - Church Planting Taskforce meeting in Melbourne;
 - received orientation to Natural Church Development, Australia (NCD), in Petrie.
- August:
 - met with Stephen Hinks, principal of Australian College of Ministries, (ACOM) in Sydney;
 - made presentations and attended the annual CRCA Ministers and Wives Conference in Sydney.
- September:
 - attended the annual Preaching Conference at the RTC;
 - met with Target 21 leaders in Geelong;
 - met with keys leaders among Afrikaans speaking migrants in Queensland.
- October:
 - met with the faculty of RTC in Geelong;

- attended the annual Willow Global Leadership Summit in Brisbane.
- November:
 - received Willow Creek Ministry Advantage training in Sydney;
 - Church Planting Taskforce meeting in Melbourne.

Multiplying leaders is one aspect of reaching the lost for Christ; another is multiplying churches. In addition to encouraging pastors, sessions, and churches in the missional task of discipling the nations, in my role as Ministry Training Coordinator I work with the Church Planting Taskforce in stimulating and strengthening church planting in Australia. Besides meeting with the taskforce I have engaged in mentoring emerging churches and church planters. Currently I am working with a number of church growth initiatives:

- Mansfield: Planting a new congregation using small group strategies and employing two home missionaries;
- Newcastle: Planting a singular congregation in Tanilba Bay through the efforts of a recently hired pastor – a partnership with the Newcastle congregation;
- Wongan Hills: Gathering a unique community of believers committed to outreach, in partnership with the Perth congregation;
- Dalwallinu: A ministry to gather believers in the bush area of WA, in partnership with the Perth congregation;
- Kalgoorlie: A church plant among Afrikaans migrants committed to outreach, in partnership with the Grace congregation.

In addition, in my visits with pastors and churches I have been challenging them to consider how they could reach out to the unchurched in their community. This has resulted in a number of churches deciding to undergo a NCD survey to determine congregational health. Some are considering how they can do a church plant. Other churches have engaged in doing a Community Opportunities Scan to assist them in development a strategy for “needs orientated evangelism.” Still others are strengthening their resolve to consider how they can best contribute to the fourfold task.

Virtually every congregation in the CRCA has been impacted with the many migrants coming from South Africa. Many of these immigrants are believers who share a common Reformed heritage. The CRCA is in a unique position to assist these newcomers to Australia to find a “church home” by enfolding them into our churches and denomination and/or assisting in the establishment of Afrikaans speaking churches. In my meetings with key leaders among Afrikaans speaking migrants we have been exploring how we can best journey on the road ahead together.

A critical component in assisting pastors and churches in their missional efforts is providing resources and a link within the CRCA to encourage discussion and a sharing of ideas. This is facilitated through the ministry formation website, www.ministryformation.com.au. This website is also linked to the denominational website. This website fulfills the mandate given by Synod 2006, that the Ministry Formation Workgroup facilitate changes in the denominational website:

- to include the mission and its progress;
- to show the mission plans of congregations and standing committees;
- to show progress against those plans;
- to show particular successes and failures and the causes thereof;
- to inform prayer;
- to serve to record the hand of God upon us as a witness itself;
- to provide links to recommended reading under appropriate mission headings, books, synod reports, other web sites, etc;
- to provide Bible studies on mission themes;
- to provide references to other mission resources, videos, tracts.

The website has a resource page linked to the four areas of the fourfold task providing helpful resources which will grow each month. These resources will be sourced from a number of different

websites and ministries which seek to develop our effectiveness in ministry and mission. Churches, pastors, and individuals will be able to access these resources to assist them in the fourfold task. A monthly E-Newsletter will go out to all the churches and pastors highlighting upcoming events and interesting articles. Pastors and individuals will also be able to log on to the website to discuss ideas and thoughts with the Ministry Formation Team. This website was launched in October coupled with the initial E-Newsletter and the denomination-wide distribution of the Ministry Formation brochure.

Observations

As I made my way across the denomination I find myself in a unique position to observe the denominational heartbeat. It was so encouraging to discover a church eager to move ahead with the Missional Vision and the Fourfold Task. Here are some positive indications:

- Rather than question the rationality of the missional focus of ministry formation, church leaders want to discover ways they could embrace the vision and fourfold task.
- There is an overwhelming appreciation of the ministry training provided by the Reformed Theological College.
- Most churches either have developed or are seeking ways to develop holistic small groups. Church leaders are recognising that the pastoral care and discipling of members are best done through small group ministries.
- There is a ground swell of enthusiasm among the youth and young adults within the CRCA. This vibrant demographic in our denomination is a valuable asset as we move ahead developing ministry and mission.
- The majority of churches have a heart for gospel ministry, both word and deed, beyond the walls of the church and borders of Australia.

It was quickly evident to me that within the CRCA there is a lot of diversity. Church structures, style of worship, understanding of the role of women in leadership, strategies for outreach, just to name a few, are some of the differences. Some churches courageously admit that if they are ever going to be effective in ministry and mission, they will have to change some things. A review of congregational statistics or the results of a NCD survey have pointed out that the way they have been doing things simply have not contributed to reaching the lost for Christ. And so these leaders set out to reform the life of their churches.

As I met with these churches in all their diversity, it is obvious that there is not just one way to effectively make a gospel impact; God uses diverse ways and churches of all sorts his wonders to perform. Yet, in spite of this rich diversity there is a deep rooted sense of unity – unity in the essentials of the Reformed faith: a profound commitment to the sovereignty of God, the sufficiency of Christ, the supremacy of the Word of God, and the mission to reach lost for Christ – to be a church reforming itself to the truth of God’s Word. In this spirit of unity there is also lots of charity – a willingness to allow diverse congregations to give shape to their respective ministries in a way that will best serve the fundamental aim of reaching a lost world for Christ.

While the denomination on the whole is positively engaged in fulfilling our gospel calling, there are a number of gaps which need to be filled if we will realise sustainable ministry formation in the years ahead. Here are some of the gaps I discovered as I moved around the denomination:

- Very few churches are actively engaged in raising up the next generation of leaders. Too often the refrain is heard in churches: “We cannot find enough leaders to effectively lead our church!” We as pastors, church sessions, classes, and the denomination need to actively and intentionally pursue the third aspect of the fourfold task: “multiply the number of well-trained persons”.
- Church planting is not on the horizon of the majority of churches. With the Australian population growing by 1 million new people every 3 years, with more than 19 million people needing to be reached with the gospel, and with increasing migration, we need

thousands of new churches in Australia. Planting new churches is the most effective way to reach the lost for Christ.

- We are losing ground not only among those Christ calls the lost but also with many of the found. Facts are our friends. This axiom is critical to underscore as we look at the annual statistics in the CRCA. This simply highlights the importance of ministry and denominational alignment. We need to keep asking ourselves the question: “Are we fulfilling the fundamental aim of reaching the lost for Christ?” If not, then like a number of our member congregations, we as churches, classes, and denomination too need the courage to change the way we are and the way we do church. There needs to be an alignment of all our individual visions to the denominational vision: “A church reforming to reach the lost for Christ.”

All of this simply brings us back to the vision reaffirmed at Synod 2006 – to be “a church reforming to reach the lost for Christ.” This will require a renewed commitment to:

- multiply numerically and plant new churches;
- train a growing number of leaders; and,
- align everything we are and do to fulfill our Gospel calling.

This is something we cannot do on our own. Reaching the lost is fundamentally the work of God and his Spirit. Therefore we need to be a people of prayer – intentionally praying for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit so that as our hearts are set afire with a sacrificial compassion for the lost in world, we may see ourselves more effective in ministry and mission. And as we reach out with the good news in word and deed, representing Christ with godly lives and good deeds, an impact will be made for the gospel resulting in unbelievers glorifying God with us.

Appendix 5

Proposed Church Visitation Questions

Preliminaries

The Classis shall appoint at least two senior ministers as Church Visitors (see CO Art 45), to visit each church annually. The date set for the visit must allow sufficient time for the Session to prepare thoroughly for the visitation. Much of the benefit of the Church Visitation will be in the way the Session interacts on the questions before the visit. The questions below would provide excellent material for a Session retreat.

The meeting with the Church Visitors should be announced to the congregation. Congregation members should have the opportunity to meet with the Church Visitors if they have concerns that they have already discussed with the Session but have not yet been satisfactorily resolved.

It is expected that the minister/s, elders and deacons will attend the meeting, with an attendance of not less than 75% of the full session. The Church Visitors should take a full record of the discussions, submitting this to the Session for approval after the meeting. Once agreed upon, this record of the meeting will be submitted to Classis.

Sessions should be frank and open with the Church Visitors and identify any areas of difficulty or tension in church life that threaten the well-being of the church and the work of the gospel.

Key areas of Interaction

The areas of discussion and interaction identified below are shaped around the CRCA fourfold mission task. The intention is not that Sessions try to give “right” answers, but that they think carefully and interact honestly on how the church is doing in its gospel calling.

1. Prayer and Worship

- a. Evaluate your church’s commitment to **prayer** and the things you are doing to encourage a spirit of absolute dependence on God in all things. In what specific ways does your church particularly engage in prayer for the lost, calling upon God for spiritual awakening and great gospel harvest?
- b. Describe your approach to public **worship**. What style of worship are you cultivating and why? How do you assess the health of your worship services? In what ways are you seeking to evidence a Reformed view of worship?¹
- c. Assess the **preaching** ministry – what are its strengths and weaknesses, its focus and its effectiveness? Who is involved in the preaching ministry? Are new preachers being trained in any way? Is the preaching ministry regularly evaluated by the elders?

2. Multiplication of Ministry

- a. Is your church **growing**? Why or why not? What are your strategies and plans for growth and/or church planting?
- b. Evaluate your church’s commitment to **mission** both locally and overseas. Reflect on the extent to which a mission-mindedness lives in the congregation. Describe the kinds of

¹ For Synodical comment on this see Acts of Synod 1988.

- evangelistic outreach being used.
- c. How effective is your **diaconal** ministry in meeting needs both within the church and in your local community? How well connected is your church to its local community? What initiatives have you taken to discern and meet specific needs in the community and to bring to it the hope of the gospel?
 - d. What do you do to encourage the multiplication of **ministry** according to people's gifts and the church's resources? What new ministries are currently being developed and resourced?
 - e. What is the Session's **vision** for the future development of the church? What specific goals have you decided on for the next twelve months? What do you hope the Lord will enable you to achieve in the next five to ten years?
 - f. In what ways does the church encourage and teach a Christian **world and life view**? What Kingdom ministries (including Christian education) does the church support and encourage?
 - g. Are there any significant **problems** in the life of the church that are impeding the work of the gospel?

3. Training for Ministry

a. Leadership – Training and Oversight:

Evaluate your effectiveness in training elders, deacons and ministry leaders. What approaches and resources do you use?

Do you have a sufficient number of elders and other leaders for the congregation? What are you doing to raise up future leaders for your local church and beyond?

Evaluate the effectiveness of the mentoring, accountability structures and professional development opportunities provided for the minister/s.

Do you conduct regular reviews of the work of the minister/s and other ministry workers? How do you do this?

Evaluate the Session's effectiveness in working together as a team so that there is ongoing encouragement, accountability, training, strategic use of differing gifts, etc.

Is there serious oversight of the doctrine and life of the minister/s, elders and deacons?

b. Discipleship:

Describe the ways in which you disciple/train children, young people, new Christians and established members (this will include discussion of your approach to children's ministry/Sunday School, youth ministry and catechism, mentoring, small groups etc). How effective are these approaches in taking people on to Christian maturity?

c. Pastoral Care:

Describe your approach to pastoral care, outlining the role of the minister, elders, deacons and any other people, teams or structures involved in pastoral care. Evaluate the effectiveness of the care in not only providing comfort for the needy but in taking people on to maturity in Christ and readiness to serve him.

4. Alignment

a. Local church alignment:

Evaluate the alignment of your local church structures to your church vision. Are your structures (committees, classes, small groups, programs, etc) effective and appropriate for what you are trying to achieve? How do you review them and what changes have you made in the last year?

b. Denominational alignment:

Evaluate the alignment of your local church to the CRCA Church Order and synodical decisions.

You should note any places where you depart from the Church Order and synodical decisions, the reasons why and the ways you have addressed those departures.

Your reflection should include such matters as:

- regularity of Session meetings (CO Art 33);
- the practice of Mutual Censure (CO Art 33);
- separation of the Diaconate if women are ordained as deacons (CO Art. 31);
- worship services twice each Sunday (CO Art 56);
- use of the prescribed liturgical forms and approved Bible versions (CO Art 57);
- regular confessional preaching (CO Art 59);
- regularity of the Lord's Supper (CO Art 63);
- taking up of prescribed offerings (CO Art 64);
- instruction of youth in the Scriptures and confessions (CO Art 65);
- visiting of the congregation by the pastor and elders (CO Art 66);
- use of the Form of Subscription (CO Art 5);
- use of correct membership transfer procedures (CO Art. 68);
- Session approved marriages only (CO Art 70);
- use of the correct disciplinary procedures (CO Art 76-85).

5. Stewardship

- a. Evaluate the church's patterns of giving and the financial health and priorities of the congregation.
- b. Provide current church statistics on membership (communicant and baptised), worship attendance, transfers, Professions of Faith, baptisms, weddings, the number of elders and deacons, and the frequency of session and congregational meetings.
- c. What policies are in place for child protection? What other policies are in place in order to ensure compliance with Government regulations?
- d. Provide evidence of audited accounts, the Form of Subscription signed by office bearers, appropriate membership records, and appropriate meeting minutes and archives.